

eng.
THE
STAGE-PLAYERS
COMPLAINT.

IN
A pleasant Dialogue betweene CANE of
the *Fortune*, and REED of the *Friers*.

Deploring their sad and solitary conditions for
want of Imployment.

In this heavie and Contagious time of the Plague
in LONDON.



LONDON,
Printed for THO: BATES, and are to be sold at his shop in the
Old-Bailey. 1641.

The Stage-Players Complaint.

Quick. Prithee why? I did but conjecture out of your sweet words.

Light. Well! I see you'll never be hanged for a Conjuror. Is this a world to be merry in? Is this an age to rejoice in? Where one may as soon find honesty in a Lawyers house, as the least cause of mirth in the world. Nay you know this well enough, but only you love to be inquisitive, and to search the Nature of men.

Quick. You say true indeed: I can't deny but that the world do swell with grief-bedaubing cares. For illustrate the whole Universe, from *Aurora's* purple doors, to the Occidental West, and you shall find all things drowned in the floods of sorrow. And no marvel too: For here Gods heavy hand doth punish, there man's oppression do reign: And what greater affection can be expected, than that both of God and Man.

Light. 'Tis true: And now a days 'tis very difficult to live without one of them.

Quick. Revolve all human nature: Here you may see a man puff'd up with the wind of popular applause, climbing to the top of Honour, but being once touch'd with the breath of Justice, oh in what a moment doth he tumble down. There you may see one oppressed with the tyranny of disgrace, and groaning under the burden of calamity, but being smil'd upon by Justice, oh how suddenly is he

mounted up with the wings of Fame. There you may perceive women lamenting the deaths of their poor Husbands; here one deploring the Churches Anarchy: there one grieving at Fortunes malignity: so that in the whole world such diverse streams of sorrow do flow every where: that if they should meet: they would easily make up an Ocean.

Light. You speak of the Epidemical cause, that produceth universal grief, but you shall not need, for we ourselves have cause enough to mourn for our own misfortune, and not to participate with the grief of the whole world.

Quick. Well! we must submit ourselves to Gods all-disposing providence, who in his own time will give a period to our irregular tears. But our cause of sorrow, is the cause of the whole world: For I'm persuaded that there's never a *What lack you Sir* in all the City, but is sensible of our calamity too, although we seem to them to bear the greatest burthen thereof.

Light. I believe thee: therefore I think, they may well commiserate our cause with their own, and not account us so ridiculous to the vulgar spectacle of the world. For when we rejoice, they do all rejoice with us; but when we lament, they have all cause to lament too: wherefore let not that thing trouble you so much.

Quick. Ay, come, let us omit this pathetic passion, and think on the brave times which we have had heretofore : Oh, the times, when we have vapoured in the streets, like Courtiers.

Light. A pretty comparison ! like Courtiers indeed ; for I think our pockets were as empty as the proudest of them.

Quick. Oh the times, when my tongue have ran as fast upon the Scene, as a *Windebankes* pen over the Ocean.

Light. Oh the times, when my heels have capered over the stage as light as a *Finches* Feather.

Quick. But (alas) we must look for no more of these times I fear.

Light. Why so ? Dost thou think because a cloud sometimes may cover and obnubilate the Sun, that it will therefore shine no more ? Yes I'll warrant you, and that more bright too : so never fear Boy, but we shall get the day again for all this.

Quick. But I'll assure you 'tis to be feared : For Monopolers are down, Projectors are down, the High Commission Court is down, the Star-chamber is down, and (some think) Bishops will down ; and why should we then that are far inferior to any of those not justly fear least we should be down too ?

Light. Pish, I can show thee many infallible reasons to the contrary : we are very necessary and commodious to all people : First for strangers, who can desire no better recreation, than to come and see a Play : than, for Citizens, to feast their wits : than, for Gallants, who otherwise perhaps would spend their money in drunkenness, and lasciviousness do find a great delight and delectation to see a Play : than, for the learned, it does increase and add wit, constructively to wit : than, for Gentlewomen, it teacheth them how to deceive idleness : than, for the ignorant, it does augment their knowledge, Pish, a thousand more Arguments I could add, but that I should weary your patience too much : Well ! in a word we are so needful for the Common good, that in some respect it were almost a sin to put us down : therefore let not these frivolous things perplex your vexatious thoughts.

Quick. But it makes me fear I'll assure you in these times : And I think it would be a very good plot to borrow good store of money and then run away : what think you of it ?

Light. A good plot, quother ? So you may come to lie in a worser plot for it all the days of your life. S' foot run away too ? So you may be taken for a young *Suckling*, and then followed presently with a hundred Horse. Fie, fie, remit these

fopperies, you little think of the last Comedy you acted now.

Quick. The last Comedy quother? I act Tragedies every day, but I cannot remember since I acted a Comedy, 'tis so long ago.

Light. But Prithee how comes it to pass that you act Tragedies every day.

Quick. How? I'll tell thee: my purse each day perisheth most Tragædically: and now I may be taken for a Scholar, since I've no money, but because I cannot speak true Latin, I'm afraid, I shall be taken for a Lawyer.

Light. What do's Lawyers then speak false Latin?

Quick. As if you know not that! Why? True Latin is as much out of fashion at *Inns of Court*, as good clothes at *Cambridge*.

Light. Come, come remit your jests, and think on our present estates now: and you know the Sickness is dangerous, and increaseth weekly; therefore I think we must be content in the mean while to live like *Diogenes* in his Tub.

Quick. Well! the best remedy that I can imagine for our present Calamity, is to down on our knees humbly, and pray God to abate the Sickness, and let each true hearted Subject conjoin with us in our supplication.

Light. This motion pleaseth me exceedingly, come let us go to some other friends, and unitely join in our Prayers.

Quick. A match, come let us perform it with expedition : and in the mean while let us conclude with part of our Litany.

From Plague, Pestilence, and Famine, from Battle, Murder, and sudden Death :

Good Lord deliver us.

F I N I S.

Of the above tract, John Payne Collier, in his *Bibliographical and Critical Account of the Rarest Books in the English Language*, at page 381, vol. ii., says :—"Only two copies of this tract, relating to the Stage and Drama just before the closing of the Theatres by the Puritans, are known. The plague was prevailing in London at the time it was written, and the enemies of Plays and Players availed themselves of the visitation, as if it were sent by heaven as a punishment for indulging in such profanation."

"Andrew Cane (or Kane) was a famous comedian at the Fortune Theatre in Golden Lane, Cripplegate, and Reed quite as celebrated a performer at the Blackfriars Theatre. The reputation of Cane long survived him, and in a

tract by Henry Chapman, printed in 1673, on the virtues of the Bath waters, we read as follows :—" Without which a pamphlet now-a-days finds as small acceptance as a Comedy did formerly at the Fortune Play-house, without a Jig of Andrew Keins into the bargain." Regarding Reed, we may quote the following lines from "The Carless Shepherdess," printed fifteen years after the date of the tract before us :—

"There is ne'er a part

About him but breaks jests. ———

I never saw Reade peeping through the curtain,

But ravishing joy entered the heart."

In our "Stage-Players Complaint" Reed and Cane are brought together conversing in the street about their misfortunes. After the two first speeches, and for the rest of the dialogue, Cane is called *Quick* in the prefixes, and Reed *Light*, which probably gives us the appellation by which they were then popularly known.

The piece is wretchedly printed, and full of errors, and everything about the tract, its authorship, its typography, and its purpose, shows that it was brought out with extreme celerity.



